

After the Bomb

—April 20, 1995; Oklahoma City

Beneath my clothesline: two tiny sparrows, blue-veined,
sparse feather-fuzzed. Blown, I suppose, from the
tree in last night's storm. The storm
that kept the children awake as thunder
pounded the windows, explosions of sound like a—

It is Thursday, and I can't say it.
I can only hang laundry because I am numb,
because there is comfort in doing what I do and
what I know in the face of all I can't do
and will never understand.

And so with arms raised,
I hang laundry—daughter's pajamas,
son's favorite shirt. The act is serene but my mind is
a sky-piercing *no*—*no* to flames and a silence like
thunder. *No* to camera crews, cranes, and yellow

police tape. *No* to concrete slabs, medic tents,
flags at half mast, *no* to a thousand stitches broken
glass broken bones broken babies *no*
to waiting body bags grief
stories too painful to tell.

No to the sun still rising, the grass still growing,
holly hedge, irises, careless blue sky.
No to mockingbirds, humming birds, cardinal
songs. *No* to finches and gray mourning
doves.

And *no* to the sparrows—the yellow-beaked
sparrows. *No* to the elm tree they fell from.
No to god's eye that was sleeping. And *no*
to the almighty fingers they—hollow-boned, weightless—
slipped through.

